



Rendering cross-cultural transformation using art for peace education: a study of windows project in Delhi

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ABSTRACT

Art is understood as comprehensive and advanced human activity that defines human subjectivity and experiences and helps transcending and transforming the same as a tool for social change. This makes art and related expressions an ideal tool for educating children by affecting the emotional intelligence and thereby positively impacting global peace. Permeating art in the existing educational system will also bring out sensitization for cross-cultural transformation. Children from a very early age understand the vacillating dimensions of peace and conflict. To ensure positive development of emotional intelligence and release of the outcomes of these structures in children at an impressionable age, art is thought to be the best medium. For facilitating these expressions WINDOWS project in the south zone of metropolitan Delhi provides organized space for children to develop a positive understanding of peace, conflict and its determinants and thereby influencing cross cultural transformation and global peace. This paper aims at drawing connections between peace-conflict, education, urban children and aesthetic expressions. The innovative practices followed by the project and the impact of the development of the concepts of peace and conflict among children are the key focus of this proposition. Art is related to emotional expression, Windows project aims at providing spaces for urban children to cognize peace and conflict through artistic expressions. The study aims to qualitatively study the WINDOWS project and its impact

on cognition and conceptual understand of peace and conflict through visual expression on urban children aged 6-10 years. The data was collected from a total of twelve respondents ($N=12; n_1=10, n_2=2$); including two categories of respondents a). Facilitators and b). Children. The narratives of the respondents accumulated through interview schedule and were qualitatively analysed. The paper attempts to empirically derive the circular modules that are evident in the strategy of the WINDOWS program for the meta need of cross cultural transformation and peace.

Key Words: Artistic Expressions, Peace and Conflict Studies, Art and Child Development, Emotional Intelligence.

1. THEME EXPOSITION

Peace is understood as a multidimensional and comprehensive phenomenon by the post-modernists, instead of a unipolar concrete concept always seen as one pole of the dimension of peace and conflict. Peace is studied in several magnitudes and from various perspectives such as ranging from transnational and global peace to conflict resolution at Microsystems. This complexity and attempt to understand this complexity has taken scholars towards far reaching connections between art, peace and child development, which ultimately culminates finally into global peace.

This subsection or perspective describes the role of artistic expressions, child development and peace education. The paper attempts to draw connection between the subsets of these concepts. As mentioned above peace and conflict are supplementary and complementary. Post modernists even recognize for minimal creative resistance as a pre-determinant of peace and justice. Conflict has been a salient aspect of the human experience for ages. It has existed globally between nations, locally among various cultural groups, in dyadic relationships, and within individuals. Efforts to resolve, rise above, and transform conflict have been met with a myriad of challenges. These challenges are comprised of systemic, cultural, and individual variables that must be addressed in order to realize progress (Carter, 2010).

The impact of social and cultural milieu on conflict is worth exploring. While looking at India, curious mind would like to draw out differences between urban and rural situation. One can assume that poverty would pose additional challenges in everyday living due to economic hardship leading to conflict situations; however one cannot presume that this applied to the Indian rural scenario. Rural settlements seem to have an in-built mechanism for restoration of peace even if a conflict does arise. In urban areas however, conflict has a different nature, a mind of its own, there are too many myriad factors influencing, rather adding fire to a trigger. Peace, then, if we see as absence of conflict is inculcated somewhat differently in urban and rural India. Though in both of these presented situations, peace education is not formally a part of any curriculum; it is an implicit wisdom that is passed on.

The way we perceive is also varies from one situation to another, but whether it a communal riot in a state or a nation at war it is recognized as a conflict situation. The reasons, which lead up to a conflict situation, arise in the mind of an individual, of a group, all shaped by the society at large. Transformation of conflict on an individual level creates a foundation for effectively dealing with systemic and cultural issues that evidence conflict and, in so doing; create opportunities for the development of a global culture of sustainable peace. From this perspective, peace is more than the absence of war; it involves freedom, justice, conflict resolution, nonviolence, community building, and democratization of authority (Olusakin, 2007).

Conflict transformations the process of constructive change (Lederach, 2003). Lederach (2003) describes conflict transformation as: a way to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships (Carter, 2010). Specifically in contexts of oppression, injustice, violence, and war, peace education programs can powerfully transform worldviews from conflict orientation to peace orientation (Clarke-Habibi, 2005). Although the common trends in peace education include: conflict resolution training, democracy education and human rights awareness training, Clarke-Habibi (2005) proposes an integrated perspective that the culture of peace is attained only from an authentic process of transformation for both the individual and the collective.

Conflict transformation then needs to look at the ecological systems theory which views the person as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment. Since the child's biologically influenced dispositions join with environmental forces to mold development, Bronfenbrenner characterized his perspective as a bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). Bronfenbrenner envisioned the environment as a series of nested structures, including but extending beyond the home, school, neighborhood, and workplace settings in which people spend their everyday lives. Each layer of the environment is viewed as having a powerful impact on development. The innermost level of the environment is the microsystem, which consists of activities and interaction patterns in the person's immediate surroundings. Bronfenbrenner emphasized that to understand development at this level, we must keep in mind that all relationships are bidirectional. For example, adults affect

children's behavior, but children's biologically and socially influenced characteristics their physical attributes, personalities, and capacities-also affect adults' behavior. The mesosystem, connection among immediate settings; the exosystem, social settings that affect but do not contain the developing person; and the macrosystem, the values, laws, customs, and resources of the culture that affect activities and interactions at all inner layers. The chronosystem is not a specific context. Instead, it refers to the dynamic, ever-changing nature of the person's environment. While all these nested structures and their interaction is important, we need to select a level of intervention and while looking at children the obvious choice is a school where all one can note the interplay of all structures outlined by Bronfenbrenner.

Here, it is worth considering the example of Jane Sahi, who was interested in the educational ideas of Rudolf Steiner and Rabindranath Tagore and started a small school in Silvepura village on the outskirts of Bangalore in 1975.

A Kannada medium school up to the 7th class, Sita School is totally outside the formal educational system, following its own curriculum and methods of teaching. Artistic activity is one of the principal mediums through which children educate themselves with the help and guidance of the teachers. Most children attending Sita School are from the common poor folk who would otherwise have had to go without education. The children come from the five surrounding villages and are mostly first generation school goers (Sahi, 2000). Sahi subscribes to the concept of 'Roots and Branches' and presents her search for a mode of practice for educating children to be rooted and to grow. For her, 'growing the soil' and 'nurturing the plant' are not only metaphors; ecological sustainability is both a philosophy of human existence and a spiritual beacon, giving 'interconnectedness' a scope wider than human society and culture. Her insights, anecdotes and stories infuse these metaphors with a new vigour. In an approach to understanding Gandhi's philosophy of education which breaks away from the stereotyped and narrow productive approach that goes under 'basic education'. Jane Sahi is critical and yet responsive to Gandhi, not merely as a follower but as an enquiring and creative educationist (Sahi, 2000). Artistic activity embedded in the school curriculum to instill value of peace while acknowledging conflict will go a long way to achieve the larger goal of global peace.

1.1. Peace and conflict through and emotional intelligence and artistic expression

The philosophy of art therapy is being justified and applied in the context of projective techniques. Betts (2003) has cited Cohen 1985 to explain how several art therapists have developed projective techniques and told to help individual express their emotions by giving concrete shapes to unstructured/vague or abstract stimuli. Silver (1986) noted that even if one's language and communication is impaired or suffers deficit due to plethora of reasons one would be able to express through artists mediums. Illustrations of this are apt in the context of 16-Picture Frustration Study.

Betts asserted that stimulus drawing s prompt response drawing that solves problems and represent concepts. Providing ample stimulus, motivation and space for the child in this context can help in her/him manipulate and create the stimulus into paintings, installations and other products of artistic expression. This can be used to can gauge their emotional response and can help a trained facilitator understand the degree of peace and conflict dynamics within an individual, among individual and between the individual and her/his environment. Plate 1 illustrates how 7-year-old Priya describes conflict arising from survival need and mechanism and how individuals (here represented by animals) negotiated and reconciled to share resources and resolve conflict.



Plate 1

The story reads "Once upon a time there was a peacock, tiger, cheetah, elephant, hen, and zebra who use to always fight, then one day while they were walking in the morning, they saw a nice river and not fight. Then some people saw them and started fighting with the animals. At the end the animals won because of their strong friendship and they lived happily ever after."

The story depicts a plethora of values related to peace as well as the importance of collective efforts succeeding in conflict. The allegory of using animals is also significant as allegories and symbols facilitate enhanced representation of one's internal conflicts.

1.2. Emotional intelligence and peace

The emotions associated with peace were intensely. The study by Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, USA states that the emotions could range from anxiety, excitement, fear, to apology, embarrassment and joy. The purpose of peace education agents is to harbor the positive ones and WINDOWS project attempts to generate them through art. The negative and strong ones, which require urgent release, are effectively regulated, and diffused by the facilitator.

1.3. Peace and Conflict Study through a Child Development Perspective

According to the lifespan perspective, pathways of change are highly diverse because multiple forces influence development: biological, historical, social, and cultural (Berk, 2008). Some theorists believe that development is smooth, continuous process. Individuals gradually add more of the same types of skills. While other theorists think, that development takes place in discontinuous stages. People change rapidly as they step up to a new level and then change very little for a while. With each new step, the person interprets and responds to the world in a qualitatively different way (Berk, 2008).

For the purpose of this paper, we are focusing on middle childhood, children in the age group of 6-10 years. Views from other theorists support middle childhood as an ideal time for creative engagement with regard to peace education. While in early childhood the focus is more on development of motor skills and language, in middle childhood, a logical thought process develops, basic literacy skills are developed, there is understanding of self, morality and friendship. This stage in particular seems to be the ripe age for percolation of 'peace education' through age appropriate medium, which would actively engage children. Freud in his psycho – sexual theory describes, this stage as 'Latency', where the sexual instincts die down, and the superego develops further. The child acquires new social values from adults and same-sex peers outside the family. Erik Erikson in his psycho-social theory describes this stage as the dilemma between 'Industry versus Inferiority'. At school, children develop the capacity to work and cooperate with others. Inferiority develops when negative experiences at home, at school, or with peers lead to feelings of incompetence. Children who are able to resolve the dilemma posed by this stage will successfully transition to the next stage. Encouragement of creative processes at this stage will help them in the resolution posed by this stage.

Psychologists wanted to explore whether behaviorism might explain the development of social behavior better than the less precise concepts of psychoanalytic theory. This sparked approaches that built on conditioning principles, offering expanded views of how children and adults acquire new responses. Several kinds of social learning theory emerged. The most influential, devised by Albert Bandura, emphasizes modeling, also known as imitation or observational learning, as a powerful source of development (Berk, 2008). The concept of imitation poses some pressure on the child's microsystem. However, according to Bandura's revised view, children gradually become more selective in what they imitate. From watching others engage in self-praise and self-blame and through feedback about the worth of their own actions, children develop personal standards for behavior and a sense of self-efficacy-the belief that their own abilities and characteristics will help them succeed. These cognitions guide responses in particular situations (Bandura, 1999, 2001).

Piaget however did not believe that children's learning depends on reinforcers, such as rewards from adults. According to his cognitive-developmental theory, children actively construct knowledge as they manipulate and explore their world. He describes middle childhood as the Concrete Operational stage where children's reasoning becomes logical. School-age children understand that a certain amount of lemonade or play dough remains the same even after its appearance changes. They also organize objects into hierarchies of classes and subclasses. However, their thinking still falls short of adult intelligence. It is not yet abstract, but they begin to understand concepts. Critics also point out that Piaget's stage wise account pays insufficient attention to social and cultural influences on development. Finally, some lifespan theorists disagree with Piaget's conclusion that no major cognitive changes occur after adolescence (Berk, 2008).

Hence, we have established that middle childhood is an appropriate age for peace education through schools. Educating for peace is crucial due to the normalization of violence and its influence on well-being. As a human right, students must learn about how a healthy life, for everyone, can be sustained without violence as a response to conflict. In peace education lessons about the sources of and responses to conflict, students analyze current problems and how they can be avoided, as well as responsibly

managed. They need a vision of a peaceful future as a foundation for peacemaking and skills for constructing it (Carter, 2010).

1.4. Windows: a space for expression

The windows project was initiated as a studio or constructive space by the facilitator in 2005. The objective was to provide a creative such as room for urban children of cosmopolitan Delhi to express themselves through various forms of art. The process and management is as explained in Plate 2.

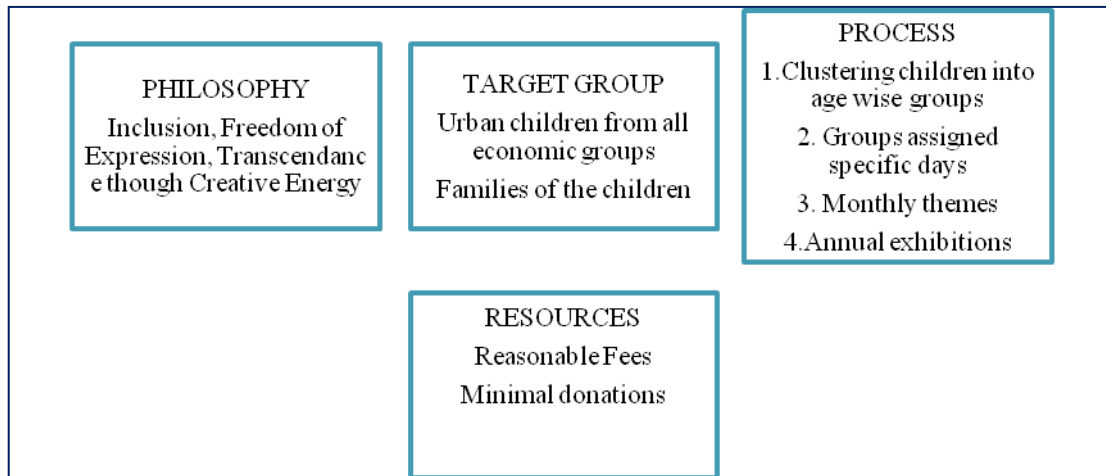


Plate 2

1.5. Windows as a Creative 'Space'

The physical attributes of Windows does not qualify as a formal learning space, which itself acknowledges the free flow of creativity and imagination. It is channelized in a spacious attic at the residence of the founder. Many theorists have revealed the inherent flaws in how we normally 'order' the world through binary opposition such as informal/formal (Baudrillard, 1981, Bhabha, 1994). The project has the structure of an informal learning space. The space facilitates flow of creativity and freedom of expression, the inherent philosophy of the project. There are several aspects of the initiative which has characteristics of Post-Structuralist paradigm of education. However, while perceiving from the critical lens, it has been found that there are several micro and macro issues which highlighted can help in being more inclusive. These are listed in the concluding section of the paper.

2. OBJECTIVES

- Given are the objectives around which the qualitative study is constructed.
- To underscore the importance of the peace education through artistic expression with illustrations from WINDOWS project in Delhi.
- To outline the connections between peace education, child development and artistic expression
- To subscribe to critical theory to generate newer dimensions of peace education through artistic expression.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study is a qualitative in nature, the data was collected through interview guidelines and narratives were recorded for analysis.

3.1. Sample

The Study was conducted with WINDOWS project in Delhi, and all the twenty children from the age group of 6-10 years along with their two facilitators were taken as the unit of case study. The consenting participants for the study included, a) facilitators , b) twenty students (from the age group ranging 6 to 10) (the names used in the paper are false to conceal the identity of the respondents).

3.2. Tools

For collecting information on art and its impact of understanding of peace and conflict for children; two set of interview guidelines were used, a) Facilitator's Version and b) Children's Version.

4. FINDINGS

The narratives derived from both the facilitators and the students children are categorized into various parameters and the findings are as presented:

4.1. Phases and dimension of peace building and conflict resolution

The WINDOW project therefore provides opportunity, space and guidance for artistic expression and help in garnering peace and resolving conflicts. Drawing from this continuum, the paper attempts to understand the child development perspectives of artistic expressions encouraged by the Windows project for children from various age categories through various stages of conflict resolution theorized by Brahm (2003).

- a) **Emergence:** Emergence is when the conditions for conflict arise and a potential conflict becomes one Brahm and Kriesberg call "latent conflict," this is the stage of personal or individual conflict. the conflict among 6-10 years of age could be understood from developmental studies (longitudinal, cross-sectional etc). Freudian and post-Freudian theories explain the 'latent' conflict stemming from unfulfillment or partial fulfillment of developmental needs and frustration emanating from the same. This could be best assessed through given ways: (1) Self Drawing: with face as a focus as it reflects elements of physical attributes, attitudes and construction of the 'self'. As Lacan (1936) explains it the 'mirror' imagery is constructed. Though the Lacanian perspective is about 15-18 months old children, the post Freudians are of the view that the 'mirror imagery' sediments into different levels. (2) Using clay modeling and sculpting; using kinesthetic and complex touch-eye-hand coordination to understand the emotions and thereby understand the dimension of strong and positive feelings.
- b) **Escalation:** this stage is relational, has social overtures, and involves more than two parties. Here, the conflict at individual level is understood more clearly and the sources are also given form and meaning. The sources could be agents in the micro-system such as parents, care takers, school, peers etc. In this stage, the conflict escalates either as both parties perceive the other's intentions, correctly or, as is often the case, erroneously. This is the stage where the parties involved begin exhibiting behaviors in direct opposition to the opponent's perceived intentions, such as competitive statements and avoidance tactics. In children, the later is more evident. To gauge and understand these strong emotions are easy through artistic expression. Providing space for abstract expressions such as scribble drawing, they can be used as a tool to get away from conscious drawing. Here the external control and expectations are minimal and therefore the opportunities to reflect their feelings are wide and varied. A facilitator in WINDOWS project is trained to understand and study a child's strong emotions and conflict escalating at this stage and is therefore shared and discussed with the child's significant others.
- c) **Crisis:** The child at this stage expresses strongest emotion and therefore, the conflicting agents are the individual and the environment. The crisis might amount to factors such as truancy, self or environmental destruction and will be fully manifest conflict. here the facilitator at the windows project practice techniques such as *Mandala* art form. Anderson (1990) has extensively studied this Buddhist art form, it is a circular design used to represent wholeness and invoke healing energies. It is largely used to explore conflict. but, the calming effects help in creating an alternative to aggression as the only manifest way of expressing conflict.
- d) **Negotiation and Reconciliation:** At this point, the situation reaches the "de-escalation" stage and the possibility for some sort of settlement emerges. The children are helped by other agents in her/his micro-macro systems to assuage the conflict and attempts are made to resolve the same. Art forms at this stage begin to be more specialized, and attempts are further made towards concrete sketching which helps the child in understanding the self-concept in the post conflict phase and to explore the absorption of harmony, peace and truth by the child. It also involves abstract art with existential
- e) **Creative Resistance:** While peace has been emphasized and stressed upon, the post modern outlook to peace should not be forgotten. The theories suggest that conflict as imperative and crucial as peace in ensuring global justice, which is the ultimate goal. The facilitators who train children in artist expression for creative resistance acknowledge this. The children are provided themes such as 'Green Earth' and 'Gender Discrimination' on which they make posters. Here the responses are different and require a reasonable degree of conflict which the children understand and is imbibed in them constructively.

Not all the stages of peace building and conflict management are seen as linear but as circular patterns wherein conflict is followed by reconciliation and further generation of confronting and latent conflict due to global imbalance of power. This philosophy has been assimilated by WINDOWS project and the circular modules for each age group are discussed in the later section of the paper.

4.2. The Transformation

One of the facilitators reported that, *"the parents have reported to us from time to time about the change in the attitude of the children, their conduct and their response to stressor have also changed over the time."* The facilitators themselves reported changes in the personality of the children. She added, *"Usually changes are gradual but sometimes the realization is sudden and instinctive"*. As reported and explained in the Plate 3, the change was gradual and was realized by several sessions on artistic expression involving many techniques.

4.3. The Composition of the Group

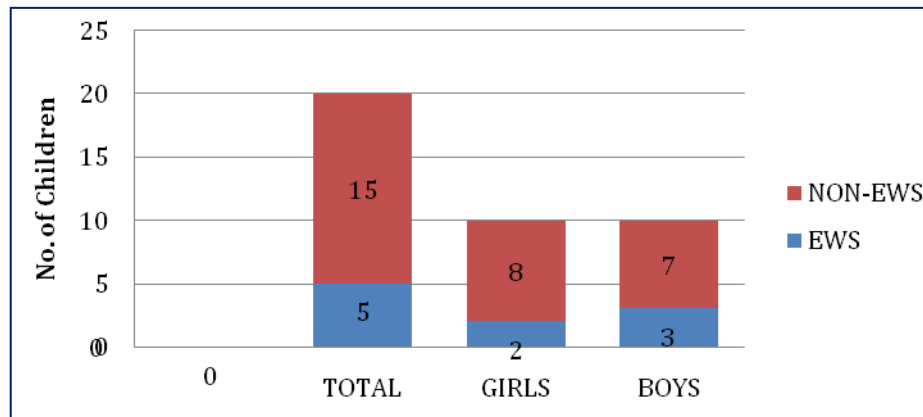


Figure 1

No of EWS and Non-EWS Children

There are five children in the group out of forty who belong to economically weaker Section, but the facilitators could narrate or describe the agency of these children and the transformation they had undergone through artist expression (Figure 1).

4.4. Rendering peace and conflict for urban children and expressing the cultural 'self'

The agency of urban children is diverse from children brought up in rural India, Children primarily learn from their parents and family and therefore, the archetypes as Jung and Lacan discusses are largely culturally established. The archetypes could be effectively manifested through several artistic expressions. However, there are yet to be collection or reflection of the same. However, the representation through art was subtly present in the art forms. The field of human development has recently seen a dramatic increase in studies addressing the cultural context of people's lives. Investigations that make comparisons across cultures, and among ethnic groups within cultures, provide insight into whether developmental pathways apply to all people or are limited to particular environmental conditions (Berk, 2008).

Socio-cultural theory focuses on how culture-the values, beliefs, customs, and skills of a social group-is transmitted to the next generation. According to Vygotsky, social interaction-in particular, cooperative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society-is necessary for children to acquire the ways of thinking and behaving that makeup a community's culture (Rowe & Wertsch, 2002). Vygotsky believed that as adults and more expert peers help children master culturally meaningful activities, the communication between them becomes part of children's thinking also.

4.5. Higher aggression and violence among urban children

The urban children experience and perceive violence and aggression at higher levels than others (Hindustan Times, Aug, 13). One of the facilitator shared the case of 9 year old Akshay who was constantly expressing strong emotions through various artistic medium; the facilitation provided by the educators and family helped him in reconciling with the issues he was facing in academics. He also learnt to understand and cognize his position in the *Mandala* activity. One of the child's sketches is as given in Plate 3.

Here the activity was to make anything revolving around theme of 'Devil' and the child drew a dark flowing river and depicted strong emotions with texts. On talking to the child, it was found that he 'had forgiven' all those who 'hurt' him and therefore wanted all the feelings he had for them to go 'deep down into the river'. This indicates that the children internalize and express even complex feelings such as forgiveness. Social, political, and economic structures of society are very much interconnected to the extent that the society experiences peace, specifically through individuals' subjective well-being (Diener& Tov, 2007). To foster a culture of

peace there needs to be an encouragement of harmony and economic equality, and the human security of all nations (Basabe& Valencia, 2007). Peace educators and peace psychologists offer a worldview that does not perpetuate cultures of conflict, but instead recognizes the human potential in its power to carry out peaceful action. By doing so, they are reformers or revolutionaries by choice, as they enhance teaching and learning practices, transform intercommunity relationships, initiate a culture of healing, and create local international bonds (e.g., in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Clarke-Habibi, (2005). Martin Luther King (1964), a great builder of peace, emphasizes this peace orientation in his words:



Plate 3

Sketches by 9 year Old

"We shall not have the will, the courage, and the insight to deal with such matters [as the achievement of peace] unless in this field we are prepared to undergo a mental and spiritual re-evaluation . . . It is necessary to love peace and sacrifice for it. We must concentrate not merely on the negative expulsion of war, but on the positive affirmation of peace. (Carter,2010)"

5. CONCLUSION

Due to a deficiency of curricula for such instruction, teachers have a large responsibility for creating the lessons and curriculum that facilitate their lessons about peace development. Consequently, they need preparation for the design and provision of peace education. Where do they develop such readiness? (Carter, 2010).

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

A central goal of peace educators is conversion of instruction that fails to proactively address violence. Including the concept of peace across subjects and contexts in schools conveys the importance of learning how peace occurs and how it can be sustained. Maintaining the concept of peace provides a heuristic for analyzing all aspects of life, especially the domains in which peace has been needed. The scope of peace contexts in a school includes use of the facility and its physical resources, implicit instruction through interactions of its participants, as well as explicit lessons teachers provide. For example, teaching the history of peace processes, identifying current variations of them, and knowing which are developmentally appropriate for use with students are knowledge bases of instructors (Setalvad, 2010; Yogev, 2010). The skills teachers hone demonstrate use of peace processes, such as multiple-perspective analysis and compassionate communication. Developing the dispositions that support such instruction, and efficacy with it, are other challenges that need to be met in teacher preparation for peace education.

FUTURE ISSUES

Art education is to move students beyond modes of passive spectatorship and towards more generative and thoughtful forms of cultural production and resistance, art educators will need to help students make meaning of, and creatively respond to, their everyday visual experiences. By encouraging critical and creative forms of cultural production and actively uncovering the

ideological struggles embedded within the visual, visual culture educators can imbue students with a meaningful ability to respond to the increasingly complex visual environment of the everyday. Combined with a determined pedagogical effort to expose and deconstruct the powerful strategies and aesthetic tactics commonly employed by artists, designers, and other producers of visual texts, visual culture educators can begin to provide their students with the required intellectual and creative tools to examine, challenge, and transform themselves, their communities, and the world(s) in which they live.

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